

reached the armory yesterday [November 8] at three o'clock until this morning at five when I laid on the floor, with an overcoat for a pillow and then I was called each time I'd get asleep." The night of the election, Metts thought that although they were ready to move at a moment's notice, most of the hysteria turned out to be false alarms. They heard gunshots all night long, and Metts determined that, if there had been any unrest, it had been "settled without us."⁴⁸

An incident that occurred at the Fifth Division of the First Ward during ballot counting sheds light on the election day tensions.⁴⁹ African American drayman Albert Lamb had been a resident of Wilmington for about nine years and served as the election judge at the precinct located at the Fifth Division of the First Ward. Also working that precinct was African American carpenter Abram Fulton, a resident of the city for 25 years who was serving as registrar at the precinct. Both Fulton and Lamb testified during the contested election case of *Dockery v. Bellamy* that, although the day passed without incident, as they began to count ballots, a crowd of about between 150 and 200 whites had either entered the building or were stationed outside. Lamb explained that the precinct was predominantly Republican in character, the men who were at the precinct were "strangers," and none of the men gathered there were registered to vote at that polling place. Soon after the crowd arrived, the lamps were knocked off the tables by "someone pushing another against the table where the lamps were" and the room went dark. Fulton tried to make his way to the back of the store to find a way out. and, as soon as the lights were re-lit, Lamb left the

precinct before the ballots were fully counted. Fulton could not find a way out and resumed counting ballots after candles were lit. After counting the ballots, Fulton left as soon as he could, but he did not sign the election returns that night. Lamb explained he left because he was "scared" because he "did not know what would happen." Fulton fully believed that his life was in "imminent danger" when the crowd rushed in to extinguish the lights. Fulton further testified that only about 20 to 30 whites were registered to vote in the precinct, and about 300 Republicans were registered, making it the "strongest Republican precinct" in the city; he knew of no black Democrats residing in the precinct.⁵⁰

Other precinct workers, white grocer Joe Benton and white dairyman George Bates, were on hand at Lamb's precinct during the ballot counting and supported the testimony of Fulton and Lamb.⁵¹ Benton, as judge of the election, testified that scattered among the crowd were "between nine and twelve policemen" who did not attempt to "prevent the disturbance." Benton also revealed that the room in which the counting took place was small, measuring approximately 16 by 20 feet.⁵² Bates,

⁵⁰ Fulton had been appointed registrar by Walker Taylor and Roger Moore. He did not sign the election returns until the Monday following the election when he went to collect his pay for serving as registrar. *Contested Election Case*, 332-337.

⁵¹ Bates also testified that "the anxiety, fear and terror among the colored people, largely the Republican voters of the city of Wilmington was very great, exceeding that of any occasion." *Contested Election Case*, 338.

⁵² W. N. Harriss, Democratic Party leader, recalled that the building was an old stable and that he led the rush of whites into the precinct as the votes were being cast. He claimed to have pushed a policeman in a barrel of water as other men knocked oil lamps over. He then said that he stuffed "several hundred" ballots into the Democratic Senate candidate's box. Harry Hayden interviewed W. N. Harriss who was present at the precinct in 1898. Hayden shared his

⁴⁸ Jack Metts, November 9, 1898, Hinsdale Papers, Duke University Library, Durham.

⁴⁹ Each of the city's wards was divided into smaller voting precincts or divisions. The first ward was characterized by a black voting majority.